



Understanding community partners' motivations to participate in academic outreach

Douglas Barrera, Assistant Director, University of California – Los Angeles
[dbarrera@college.ucla.edu]

Keywords: Academic outreach, civic interdependence, community partner perspectives

Conference track: Community partnerships and outcomes

Format: Research/scholarly paper

Summary

There exists a paucity of research which captures the voices of an institution's community partners, leaving one to speculate on the reasons why local organizations collaborate with post-secondary institutions for the purposes of these engagement activities (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Leiderman et. al, 2003; Sandy, 2007; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). The purpose of this study was to gain a sense of why teachers and counselors in schools participate in academic outreach programs. The findings elucidate a theory of civic interdependence as the lens by which to understand the community partners' motivations to participate.

A qualitative approach was chosen in which 21 counselors and teachers at urban high schools were interviewed to gain their perspective on why they choose to participate in one of two outreach programs emanating from one public research university. What emerges in this study is that the community partners' motivations for collaborating with the university are diverse. The school partners revealed that they work with their local universities out of a need for resources in helping their students gain access to college. Beyond that, they believe that a university has a unique capacity to take on this challenge, due

to its educational resources and its familiarity with changes in admissions criteria. Thus, motivations are influenced as much by ideological factors as they are by a need for services.

Contrasting Emerson's (1962) belief that an organization in a resource-dependent relationship will take steps to reduce that reliance as much as is feasible, what emerges here is that those in the schools desire to increase their interactions with their postsecondary partner. Consequently, I posit a theory of civic interdependence to capture both the tangible motivations to affiliate, as well as the philosophical rationale.

References

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. New York, NY: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Boyer, E. L. (1994, March 9). Creating the new American college. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A48.

Cruz, N. I., & Giles, D. E., Jr. (2000). Where's the community in service-learning research [Special issue]. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Fall*, 28 – 34.

Emerson, R. M. (1962). Power-dependence relations. *American Sociological Review*, 27(1), 31 - 41.

Harkavy, I. (2004). Service-learning and the development of democratic universities, democratic schools, and democratic good societies in the 21st century. In M. Welch & S.H. Billig (Eds.), *New perspectives in service-learning: Research to advance the field* (pp. 3-22). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Kezar, A. J. (2005). Challenges for higher education in serving the public good. In A. J. Kezar, T. C. Chambers, & J. C. Burkhardt (Eds.), *Higher education for the public good: Emerging voices from a national movement* (pp. 23-42). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leiderman, S., Furco, A., Zapf, J., & Goss, M. (2003). *Building partnerships with college campuses: Community perspectives*. Washington DC: The Council of Independent Colleges.

Marullo, S., & Edwards, B. (2000). From charity to justice: The potential of university-community collaboration for social change. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(5), 895 - 912.

Rhodes, F. (2007). Universities and the democratic spirit. In J. Huber & I. Harkavy (Eds.), *Higher education and democratic culture: Citizenship, human rights and civic responsibility*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publications.

Sandy, M. (2007). *Community voices: A California Campus Compact study on partnerships*. San Francisco, CA: California Campus Compact.

Stoecker, R. & Tryon, E.A. (2009). Unheard voices: Community organizations and service learning. In R. Stoecker, E.A. Tryon, & A. Hilgendorf (Eds.), *The unheard voices: Community organizations and service learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2000). Community-centered service learning: Moving from doing for to doing with. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(5), 767 – 780.